

The man who hopes to

put some sense back in Soccer

ONE RELAXED sweep of Brian Lee's arm embraced the ancient Abbey of Bisham, the old stables converted into his personal residence, and the Thames curving against the turf of his National Sports Centre.

'And Bournemouth,' he said, 'could not begin to understand how I turned down the job as their manager.'

Bournemouth are not alone. Soccer has a tendency to regard Soccer as more important than the quality of life, in some chronic cases as more important than life itself.

Three other clubs were equally amazed by Lee's summer refusal to abandon his satisfying role as director of the Bisham Abbey Sports Centre, his successful pastime as manager of non-League Wycombe Wanderers, his status as a local Justice of the Peace, and the serenity of rural Buckinghamshire for the rat race of the Football League.

Resented

He is beset by one serious problem: 'How to stop the journalists who come to the Abbey and the lads who play for Wycombe from copying the rubbish they see the First Division stars dish up on television.'

Lee would prefer to think he could influence the new season for the better. Yet he suspects that criticism from outside, however constructive, is resented by the human osrifices who treat League football as their personal property.

That much he learned during Wycombe's run of

success in last season's FA Cup.

Lee took that opportunity to make a few trenchant observations about the morality of top Soccer. Managers telephoned from all over England to leave Lee in no doubt that he was a menace.

Unashamed, Lee today nominates the qualities he

JEFF POWELL
continues his series on the new season



would like to see illuminating the new season: 'Honesty, sportsmanship, enjoyment.'

They are, after all, the expectations of the paying public.

Honesty? 'The game can ill afford to lose men like Bill Nicholson,' says Lee. 'He did not try to fool people that the rubbish they were watching was good football. It is sad to see Ron Greenwood accept that West Ham must compromise their principles and move upstairs to let it happen.'

Sportsmanship? 'We proved in our small way at Wycombe that it's not necessary to kick people and shout at referees. If one of the teams we played in the FA Cup complain we knocked them about. And we had only two players booked in winning the Rothmans Isthmian League.'

'In the League they call themselves full-time professionals, which is the amount of time they put in. And all they do is moan and groan about the physical strain and the mental pressure. They are not complete people.'

Pleasure

Enjoyment? 'That lad Chris Kelly at Leatherhead was a classic example of how the part-timers get more pleasure out of the game. He couldn't stomach League football at Millwall. We have Steve Perrin going to Crystal Palace this season but I've warned him not to go to Wycombe last season.'

Middlesbrough should have lost at Wycombe, a performance Charlton blamed on the Leakes Park slope. They won a home replay with a solitary goal in the last minute. At the time Lee told his players they had no chance. Lee prepared to admit: 'I only said that because I had to. There was no percentage in telling them the truth.'

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Declined

Bournemouth, who went for Lee after losing to his team, and Jack Charlton's Middlesbrough, were among the sides who found it no pleasure to play Wycombe last season.

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I had been to see Middlesbrough play at Everton, two of the top

three teams in the First Division at the time. It was absolute rubbish. How could I tell my players it was worse football than we played every week?

The standards in the First Division have declined because there are not enough superior players to go round. So teams like Middlesbrough and Everton exist on method, yet method is crushing the talents they do possess.'

Confident

Lee believes negative methods have given coaching a bad name. 'Coaching,' he says, 'is about encouraging whatever natural ability a lad is blessed with. But even schoolmasters are more concerned with producing winning teams than good players.'

Lee is not the only one to say the FA abolish most of the competitive football at schoolboy and youth level.'

The professional clubs

Lee and Bournemouth

JEFF POWELL quotes Brian Lee (Wycombe Wanderers) as saying he had turned down the job of manager of Bournemouth.

Never at any time has this club offered Brian Lee the job as their manager and we have

never had any discussion with him about such a job.

Harold Walker (Chairman), AFC Bournemouth.

BRIAN LEE explains: 'I was offered a job with a League club AFTER we had played Bournemouth but not WITH Bournemouth.'

these old-fashioned virtues will have many modern professionals failing about laughing. If they pause for breath, they may realise that a start was made in the season by the team who won the Championship.

'Derby' says Lee, 'gave us all something to cheer. Dave Mackay was a great player and an inspiration to his team. He told his good players at Derby nothing more than to go out and play inspiring football.'

Problem

'That proved that enjoying the game doesn't damage your chances of winning things. The problem is the fear of what it can do at the other end of the table.'

By now the First Division should have learned that the first three teams will be relegated anyway. They might as well give us a little pleasure in the process.'